



## Joint News Release

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### Joint Public Relations Team

1:00 a.m., December 19, 2009

**Primary Contact:** Jim Westhoff cell (302) 345-5877 - for updates on road conditions throughout the weekend, call Jim at this number.

#### **Members of the Joint Public Relations Team:**

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## As the trucks begin to roll, state agencies implore people to stay off the roads.

With light snow starting across the state Friday night, Delaware prepares for what could be a significant snow fall that will restrict travel and cancel activities through the weekend.

Crews from Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) are either being mobilized now or will report by 2 – 3 a.m. There are about 500 people and about 450 vehicles used whenever there is a significant snow event. “We don’t want to bring in our people any earlier than we have to, because they will be working for many hours Saturday and Sunday,” said Jim Westhoff, DelDOT spokesman.

Applying the salt and water mixture Friday afternoon seems to have worked, Westhoff said. “From the reports I am getting from areas in Kent County where it is already snowing, the primary roads are clear.”

Delaware Emergency Management Agency officials urge the public to monitor storm progress and road conditions Saturday and Sunday and to heed travel and preparedness recommendations of law enforcement and emergency management officials.

Although the storm might be moving in a northerly direction more slowly than earlier predicted, the National Weather Service (NWS) continues to predict heavy snowfall statewide Saturday. The heaviest precipitation is now predicted to cross Delaware after 12 noon. The NWS said the heart of the storm will be over the state from mid-afternoon to evening, with most of accumulation occurring between 2 p.m. and midnight Saturday.

Current predictions for snow accumulation by the end of the snow event are as follows:

New Castle County – 13”

Kent County – 14”

Sussex County – inland 12”, coastal 11”

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Even though snow is predicted to end by late Saturday night, high sustained winds and gusts will continue through Sunday. Because of the possibility of drifts and blowing snow after precipitation ends, the public is reminded to be aware of road conditions before traveling. Wind-blown snow can cause even previously cleared roads to become hazardous for driving. These conditions can affect travel into Monday, especially on more rural and less traveled roadways.

Many state agencies, including DelDOT, Delaware State Police, DEMA and the Office of Highway Safety are preparing for response to the predicted weather. The public can play a significant role in preparedness and response by staying off the roads, checking on near-by neighbors and staying informed on weather and road conditions.

Unless travel is absolutely necessary, people on the Delmarva Peninsula are encouraged to be prepared to stay close to home and avoid driving until notified of cleared and safe roadways.

Andrea Summers, spokesperson for Delaware Office of Highway Safety said people should stay off the roads if possible. "We continue to urge everyone who doesn't have to go out tonight to stay home," Summers said. "Even if you go out earlier in the evening when conditions are clear, if you're out late into the morning hours the driving and visibility conditions will be completely different. It is particularly important that people do not drink and drive this evening as alcohol impairs your motor skills and your judgment."

A spokesman for the Delaware State Police has a similar message. "If you do have to travel please take the appropriate steps and ensure that your vehicle has a full tank of gas and you have blankets and shovels in your vehicle," said Sgt. Walter Newton. "Bring your cell phone and make sure it is fully charged or you have a car charger available. If you become disabled in your vehicle, stay with your car and make sure your car exhaust is free from debris. Any motorist needing assistance should call 911."

Newton also said that motorists should have a flashlight or some sort of safety light that can help draw attention to your location if you are stranded.

The winds will also contribute to wind chill, and exposure to bare skin is to be avoided. Appropriate clothing should be worn for any outdoor activity, with special attention given to keeping ears, fingers and feet covered, dry and warm. Children playing outdoors should be monitored closely and they should be brought in for frequent warm-ups.

Pet owners should also take precautions in allowing pets out in snowy, cold weather. They can become disoriented and lost, and snow and ice removal treatment on roadways and driveways may harm paws and cause illness if ingested.

Those who have adequate food and water supplies and who have battery or crank-powered lights and radios are encouraged to check on the safety of neighbors when possible.

For National Weather Service Quick Forecast information, go to <http://forecast.weather.gov/afm/graphical.php?site=phi>. For additional updates, check DEMA Twitter, <http://twitter.com/DelawareEMA>.